

The Western Tradition: From Hobbes to Marx¹
Rutgers University, Department of Political Science
790:372 Spring 2018
MW 5:35-6:55pm
Hickman Hall 201

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This course provides a survey of Western political thought from the 17th to the 19th centuries. In addition to approaching these historical texts on their own terms, we will use them to explore three topics of pressing relevance to contemporary politics:

Authority: What is the “state” and what (if anything) justifies the authority it claims over our lives? If the state has legitimate authority, when are we permitted to resist the state?

Freedom: How should we understand freedom? What sort of freedom is worth promoting? What (if anything) justifies tolerating beliefs and actions that are noxious?

Inequality: What should our attitudes be towards increasing economic inequality? What is the relationship between material and social inequality? What does it mean to treat one another as equals?

By the end of the course, the hope is that you will not only have a greater appreciation of where many of our political ideas come from, but also be better equipped to approach these ideas with some critical distance.

The syllabus describes (1) learning goals, (2) the course materials, (3) grades and assignments, (4) rules and requirements (including important dates), (5) a course schedule, and (6) a list of student-wellness services.

1. Learning Goals

This course should contribute to the following departmental learning goals for political science (copied from <http://polisci.rutgers.edu/academics/undergraduate/learning-goals>):

- A solid foundational understanding of the critical theoretical issues underlying political life: the individual vs. the community; political obligation vs. civil

¹ This syllabus is subject to change.

disobedience; stability, revolution, and change; legitimacy and justice; and freedom and power.

- A more in-depth understanding of theoretical approaches to politics.

2. Course Materials

The following books will be available for purchase from the Rutgers University bookstore. Many of these texts are in the public domain, and thus available online for free. If you opt for online readings, I ask you to print them out and bring them to class:

Hobbes, T. *Leviathan*, ed. E. Curley, Hackett, ISBN: 0872201775

Hume, D. *Political Writings*, eds. S. D. Warner and D. W. Livingstone, Hackett, ISBN: 0872201600

Kant, I. *Political Writings*, Ed. H. S. Reiss. Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 0521398371

Locke, J. *Second Treatise of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. M. Goldie, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 0198732449

Mill, J. S. *On Liberty, Utilitarianism, and Other Essays*, ed. M. Philp, F. Rosen, Oxford University Press ISBN: 0199670803

Rousseau, J. J. *The Basic Political Writings*, 2nd Edition, ed. D. A. Cress, Hackett ISBN: 1603846735

Ed. Tucker, R. *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, W. W. Norton ISBN: 039309040X

Excerpts from the following works are available online the Sakai course website:

Bentham, J., *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* [excerpts]

Bastiat, F., *The Law*

Hume, D., *Treatise of Human Nature* [excerpts]

Locke, J. *The First Treatise* [excerpt]

Marx, K. "Notes on James Mill" [excerpt]

3. Assignments and Grading

The following components will make up your grade in this course:

Participation: 10%

Reading Quizzes: 10%

Paper 1: 25%

Paper 2: 25%

Final Examination: 30%

NB: Each of these components is a requirement for this course. Failing to complete one component is grounds for failing the course.

Participation:

Class time will involve a mixture of guided seminar-style discussion, in-class activities, and lecture when necessary. It is essential that you come to class having done the reading, with the readings, and be willing to participate. To get full credit for participation, you must engage with the material and your peers.

Reading Quizzes:

I will randomly administer six (or maybe seven...) quizzes throughout the semester at the beginning of class. These quizzes will ask you to briefly answer one of the reading questions for that day's reading (see the course schedule below). **It is important to be on time as I will conduct these within the first ten to fifteen minutes of class and there will not be makeups.** These are graded on a pass/fail basis, and I will only count your 5 highest quiz grades.

Papers:

There are two papers in this course. Each paper has a 1500 word limit. The prompts for each paper will be distributed two (2) weeks before the deadline. These papers will ask students to take and defend a position related to the reading. They will be graded on (i) clarity and organization of material, (ii) accuracy in representing the views in question, and (iii) cogency of argument. Full guidelines and instructions will be sent out with the prompts.

Final Examination:

There will be an in-class, open-book final examination in this course. The examination will involve short-answer questions that require you to (i) explain concepts and arguments presented in the texts using your own words, and (ii) compare and contrast claims advanced by the authors.

4. Rules and Requirements

Attendance:

Attendance is a *requirement*. **Missing four or more classes puts you at risk for failing this course.** If you foresee missing class, please use the Rutgers Self-Reporting Absence Application (<https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>).

Electronic Devices:

I ask you not to use laptops, cellphones, and the like in course. They tend to be a distraction for everyone. There is also good reason to believe that electronic devices inhibit learning outcomes (look it up!). Please talk to me if you have a compelling reason to use an electronic device.

Academic Integrity:

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. You are responsible for understanding Rutgers's academic integrity policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>.

Late Assignments:

Unless you have an extension or emergency, I will dock a third of a letter grade for each 24-hour period an assignment is late. **NB: Computer problems do not count as an emergency.** To that end, I *strongly* recommend using an online backup service like Google Drive or Dropbox! If you need an extension for a foreseeable reason, you must contact me by e-mail at least 24-hours before the due date.

Important Dates:

Spring Semester Begins – January 16

Drop Date without receiving “W” – January 23

Paper 1 Due – March 9

Withdraw Date – April 2

Paper 2 Due – April 27

Final Examination – May 4, 4:00-7:00pm (<https://finalexams.rutgers.edu/>)

5. Course Schedule

* = Available on Sakai as PDF

January 17 – Introduction

No reading

Part I – The Anglo-Scottish Tradition

January 22 – Hobbes I: The State of Nature and Its Problems

Leviathan, Introduction (NB: not the editor's introduction), Chapters I, III-VI, XI, XIII-XV

Reading Questions: What are the features of Hobbes's view of human nature? According to Hobbes, why can't we just get along outside political society, or in what is commonly called “the state of nature”? What does Hobbes mean by the “right of nature” and the “laws of nature”? How are they related?

January 24 – Hobbes II: The State as Solution

Leviathan, Chapters XVI-XX

Reading Questions: How do we create the state (or, in Hobbes's term, the “commonwealth”) to solve the problems of a state of nature? How does Hobbes understand “tyranny” and how does his understanding of tyranny relate to the

structure of the state? Do you think Hobbes's idea of sovereignty is applicable to today's world? Why or why not?

January 29 – Hobbes III: Freedom under the State

Leviathan, Chapters XXI, XXVI (paragraphs [1]-[39]), XXVII, XXIX, XXX, Review and Conclusion

Reading Questions: How does Hobbes understand freedom? Does it track your understanding of freedom? Under what conditions may we resist the sovereign according to Hobbes? Do these exceptions create a significant problem for Hobbes's theory of state authority?

January 31 – Locke I: Consent and Contract

Second Treatise, Chapters I-III, VI§57, VII-VIII

David Hume, *Political Writings*, "Of the Original Contract"

Reading Questions: What are the features of Locke's understanding of the state of nature? How are they different than Hobbes's? How important is consent to Locke's theory of state authority? How is it that we consent to the state's authority according to Locke? What is Hume's argument against consent as grounds for allegiance to the state?

February 5 – Locke II: Property and Revolution

Second Treatise, Chapter V

*Excerpt from *First Treatise*

Second Treatise, Chapters IX-XI, XVIII-IX

Reading Questions: According to Locke, how is that people come to have property? Locke begins with the premise that God gave us the earth to us in common. And yet, it is apparent that we do not have equal holdings. How does Locke justify this? Under what conditions may we resist the sovereign with force? Is Locke's theory of revolution too permissive?

February 7 – Locke III: Toleration

A Letter Concerning Toleration (entire)

Reading Questions: Why does Locke believe that force cannot produce faith? According to Locke, what beliefs should not be tolerated? What do you think a Lockean view of toleration would say about current controversies surrounding religion (Christian bakers refusing to bake cakes for same-sex weddings, etc.)? Do you agree with the Lockean view in these cases? If not, what alternative approach to religious toleration would you propose instead?

February 12 – Hume I: Reason and Morality

**A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2.3.3, 3.1.1, 3.1.2

Reading Questions: What is the relation between reason and passion for Hume? Why does Hume think rules of morality do not come from reason? If morality is not derived from reason, how do we go about understanding what is right and wrong according to Hume?

February 14 – Hume II: Justice and Property

Political Writings, “*A Treatise of Human Nature*,” 3.2.1-6

Reading Questions: What does Hume mean when he says justice is a convention? How does this differ from a promise? What makes justice a *moral* as opposed to a *natural* obligation? What problem does promising solve?

February 19 – Hume III: Government and Allegiance

Political Writings, “*A Treatise of Human Nature*,” 3.2.7-10, “*Of Passive Obedience*” [Optional: Re-Read “*Of the Original Contract*”]

Reading Questions: If justice exists in a state of nature for Hume, what need is there for government? What does Hume mean by allegiance? When is resistance to government permissible for Hume?

February 21 – Bentham: Utilitarianism and Reform

* *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Chapters I-II, XIII, XVII §1,

Reading Questions: What does Bentham mean by the interest of the community? What justifies punishment for Bentham? Does Bentham think it is permissible for the government to interfere with individuals against their wishes for their own good? Why or why not?

PAPER 1 PROMPTS DISTRIBUTED FEBRUARY 23

February 26 – Mill I: Liberty and Truth

On Liberty, Parts I-II

Reading Questions: Why does Mill think there is a need for a new defense of liberty? When does Mill think it is permissible to interfere with individuals? Why does Mill think we should give fair hearing to views that we think are false?

February 28 – Mill II: Experiments in Living

On Liberty, Parts III-IV, V (just the paragraph connecting p. 102-103)

Reading Questions: What is the point of allowing what Mill calls “experiments of living”? What does Mill mean by “individuality”? Is this an egoist ideal or a social one? What does Mill think the state’s role in education ought to be?

March 5 – Mill III: On Representative Government

Considerations on Representative Government, III, VII-VIII

Reading Questions: Why does Mill think representative government is a “school of public spirit,” and why does he think this is advantageous? What does Mill think about using majoritarian elections to select representatives? What does Mill think about one person one vote?

March 7 – Mill IV: The Subjection of Women

The Subjection of Women, I-II, IV

Reading Questions: Some suggest that a hierarchical relationship between the sexes is “natural.” What does Mill say about that? What are the benefits of promoting social equality according to Mill?

PAPER 1 DUE MARCH 9 AT 5PM

March 12 & 14 – SPRING BREAK

Enjoy!

Part II – The Continental Tradition

March 19 – Rousseau I: The Corruption of Enlightenment

Discourse on the Arts and Sciences (entire)

Reading questions: How does Rousseau see the link between scientific and artistic progress and moral progress? Which does Rousseau prefer, Athens or Sparta? Why?

March 21 – Rousseau II: The Domination Contract

Discourse on the Origins and Foundations of Inequality (start at p. 45 and up to the notes p. 92. Also read note xv on p. 117).

Reading questions: What does Rousseau think others get wrong about the state of nature? What is *amour propre* and why is Rousseau so concerned with it? What effects does Rousseau think property and the division of labor have on the happiness of people?

March 26 – Rousseau III: Freedom and Democracy

The Social Contract, Books I-II

Reading questions: What is the problem that Rousseau’s social contract attempts to solve? How does Rousseau understand freedom? What is the general will?

March 28 – Rousseau IV: The Possibility of the General Will

The Social Contract, Book III, Chapters 1-2, 4-5, 10, 12, 15-16, 18; Book IV, Chapters 1-2, 7-9

Reading Questions: What is the distinction between the state and the government for Rousseau? What does Rousseau think democratic legislation (*not* governance) needs to look like? Is this something we could achieve in today’s world? What does Rousseau mean by “civil religion”?

April 2 – Kant I: History and Enlightenment

Political Writings, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose,” “An Answer to the Question: ‘What Is Enlightenment?’”

Reading Questions: What is the driver of human progress in history according to Kant? Why does Kant think the state is necessary for humans? How does Kant understand the distinction between public and private reason and why does he think it is important?

April 4 – Kant II: Morality and Politics

Political Writings, “On the Common Saying: ‘This May Be True in Theory, But It Does Not Apply in Practice,’”

Reading Questions: Why does Kant think it is so important to act from a sense of duty rather than happiness? What is freedom to Kant, and how does it relate to right? What does Kant mean by the original contract?

April 9 – Kant III: Cosmopolitanism

Political Writings, “Perpetual Peace”

Reading Questions: Why must every state be a republican one to ensure peace according to Kant? Why does Kant think a federation and not a world state is required? What does Kant mean by cosmopolitan right? Why does Kant think revolution is impermissible?

April 11 – Bastiat: Law, Rights, and the State

*Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*

Reading Questions: What is the purpose of law for Bastiat? Bastiat discusses what he calls “legal plunder.” What does he mean by that? Why does Bastiat

think the law should be limited to preserving justice (and what does Bastiat mean by justice)?

PAPER 2 PROMPTS DISTRIBUTED APRIL 13

April 16 – Marx I: The Criticism of Rights

Marx-Engels Reader, “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing,” “On the Jewish Question”

Reading Questions: What does Marx believe is the task of philosophy? What does Marx think Bruno Bauer gets wrong in his push for political emancipation? What does Marx mean by the rights of the citizen in contrast with the rights of man?

April 18 – Marx II: Alienation

Marx-Engels Reader, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (Start with the section titled Estranged Labor, p. 70, and stop at section titled Critique of the Hegelian Dialectic and Philosophy as a Whole, p. 106)

*Marx, “Notes on James Mill” [excerpt]

Reading Questions: How does market-society create alienation according to Marx? What is the cost of this alienation? What do you think Marx means by “crude communism”? How does Marx think we can “carry out production as human beings”?

April 23 – Marx III: Exploitation

Marx-Engels Reader, “Capital, Volume One,” Part I, Chapter I; Part II, Chapter VI; Part III, Chapter VII; Part V, Chapter XVI

Reading Questions: What does Marx think determines the exchange-value of a commodity? What does Marx mean by “the fetishism of the commodities”? What is the distinction between labor and labor-power, and how does it relate to profit for the capitalist?

April 25 – Marx IV: History and Revolution

Marx-Engels Reader, “On the History of His Opinions (Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*),” (entire), “The Communist Manifesto,” (sections I-II, IV) “Critique of the Gotha Program,” (entire), “Capital, Volume Three” (p. 441, from “In fact, the realm...” to end of section), “The German Ideology” (only p. 160 (just the paragraph in the middle of the page)

Reading Questions: According to Marx, what drives history? How does revolution come about? What are its various stages? How does Marx understand communism? Do you think Marx’s account is scientific as opposed to utopian?

PAPER 2 DUE APRIL 27 AT 5PM

April 30 – A Review and Conclusion

No reading

FINAL EXAMINATION: May 4, 4:00-7:00pm

6. Student-Wellness Services

I have copied and pasted here a number of resources to help with student-wellness:

Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/

www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability

790:372 - Spring 2018

services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.